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ABSTRACT

A recently developed instrument was used to evaluate principals to determine if they live up to expected standards. The instrument, Principal Profile, had been developed several years before the study but had only been administered to graduate students and teachers seeking to become administrators. In the spring of 2001, the superintendent of schools for a Louisiana parish (county equivalent) agreed to administer the profile to each of the district's 14 principals and the 258 teachers working with these principals. An exploratory factor analysis resulted in a factor solution that clustered the 133 items on the Principal Profile into 7 factors: (1) Management of Personnel; (2) Domineering; (3) Lack of Goal Commitment; (4) Personal Qualities; (5) Delegation; (6) Knowledgeable; and (7) Instructional English. The Principal Profile is attached. (SLD)



TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS: A NEW INSTRUMENT

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Teacher Perceptions of Principals: A New Instrument

Introduction

A major concern to educators, parents, the business world, politicians, and stakeholders at all levels continues to be the academic performance of students in our country's schools. Numerous reform and restructuring measures are in place and undoubtedly others will be introduced in the coming years. The primary focus of these efforts is the improvement of student achievement on various standardized and competency-based tests. Terms such as "accountability" and "school performance score" have become common in the school setting as various state- mandated, "high stakes" testing programs have been implemented. Poor performance on these measures may result in undesirable consequences such as reassignment of staff, reduction in funding, and reconstitution of the school. Invariably, these reform and restructuring measures are imposed by state educational agencies and are implemented in a "top-down" fashion throughout school systems. Consequently, principals and other involved parties view reform initiatives as delegated tasks rather than acts of empowerment.

Are there reasons why the intense efforts to improve student performance are not producing the desired results? Even with the expanded use and availability of technology, improvements in teacher-training programs, an increase in the quantity and quality of staff development, and the implementation of programs designed as remedial measures for schools that do not "measure up," efforts to improve student performance continue to be disappointing.

Williams (2000) indicated that the literature on effective schools frequently cites strong leadership by the school principal as a contributing factor to school effectiveness. According to Williams, the principal's role is given considerable attention in the literature related to educational administration and in the press. He further pointed out that the increased focus on the school principal resulted from the intense interest of educators and scholars in achieving a greater



understanding of the dynamics of school effectiveness. Educational reform movements and substantial research on what causes a school to be effective have stimulated greater public interest in the importance of the principalship.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) suggested that the school principal is, in many ways, the most important and influential person in any school. The principal is responsible for all of the building's activities and the principal's leadership sets the tone for the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism, the morale of teachers, and the degree of concern about students. Principals serve as the main link between the school and community, and their performance largely determines student and parent attitudes toward the school.

Regardless of the flow of these efforts through the chain of command, the principal of each respective school is held accountable for the performance of that school and is therefore central in the effort to meet or exceed the goals of reform. Prior to the present thrusts to improve student performance, a substantial amount of research had been conducted to define the qualities necessary for effective school leadership. Recently, there has been considerable interest in more accurately defining the qualities necessary for effective leadership in "reform-based" educational environments.

In order to meet the rigorous demands of reform movements, principals must adapt to new roles that require inspiring and global visionary thinking. They must exhibit characteristics that motivate teachers, students, and parents to higher levels of involvement and ultimately achievement. Effective leadership skills are necessary to meet demands for greater accountability and for handling potential and existing problems with efficiency, intelligence, and diplomacy.

If we can acknowledge that we need strong leadership by principals in schools if reform efforts are to be effective and academic performance is to increase, what are we doing to make sure our principals are providing strong, effective leadership? It is posited by the researchers that many



of the evaluation procedures used by school districts for the purpose of measuring and ultimately improving principal performance are not effective. What can be done to determine the effectiveness of practicing principals? Historically, teachers and administrators have resisted the idea of determining the quality of their performance based on the academic success of students, but some recently adopted accountability models are built around the success of students in individual classrooms and schools. Are there other possibilities for examining and improving the performance of principals?

The researchers suggest that a plausible method for determining the effectiveness of principals would be to conduct assessments based on teacher perception. The results of such assessments could be used to develop professional growth plans for principals and also could identify areas of strength. Such an assessment instrument, presently called the Principal Profile, has been developed and used to measure the perceptions of principals and their respective teachers. Such an approach is not new. Over 20 years ago, Nakornsri (1977) investigated the difference between teachers' perceptions of their principal's administrative performance and relationships between this perception and actual administrative performance. He observed differences in the perceptions and actual performance on certain performance criteria

In a study by Williams (2000), the Audit of Principal Effectiveness (APE) was used to compare teachers' perceptions of principals in secondary schools. The study compared principals from schools that were nominated for the National Secondary School Recognition Program to principals from randomly selected schools that were not nominated. This study used a perceptual instrument (APE) that was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of principals' effectiveness. Teacher perceptions were used to identify differences in the performance of principals selected from the two types of schools. The results of this study indicated that principals in the effective



schools, those nominated for the Recognition Program, provided better leadership in organizational development and also in several other areas.

Other studies have investigated perceptions relative to various roles. In a study conducted by Keiser and Shen (2000), the researchers investigated principals' and teachers' perceptions of teacher empowerment. They indicated, in their review of literature, that they had found very limited research that compared teacher and principal perceptions of teacher empowerment. Sullivan (as cited in Keiser & Shen, 2000) indicated that empowerment has been found to be an important factor in maintaining the momentum needed for school restructuring and improvement. This gives credibility to the need to assess perceptually the utilization of empowering-type behaviors by principals, and make appropriate adjustments based on those assessments, if reform efforts are to be effective.

Overview of the study

Recognizing the key role the principal plays in the success or failure of a school and the abundant research defining the characteristics of effective principals, the researchers sought research relative to the assessment of principals to determine if they were measuring up to expected standards. It appeared that research in this area was very limited, and research about instruments designed to measure principal performance was also limited.

The purpose of this research was twofold. Initially, a district superintendent expressed the desire to administer the instrument to all teachers and their principals in the district's schools and use the resulting data for determining each principal's areas of strength and weakness as perceived by the principal's teachers. Teachers at the principal's school also evaluated the principal on each item. Each principal also evaluated performance for every item on the instrument. Items for which the teachers' perceptions of performance were lower than the principal's perception of performance were identified as potential growth areas.



A second purpose of this study was to explore the possibility of developing the Principal Profile as a valid and reliable measure for assessing the performance of principals on potential dimensions of leadership behavior. The researchers recognize that the sample (N = 272) is not sufficient to make conclusive statements regarding the validity and reliability of the instrument. Additional data collection is planned to obtain a minimum of 1000 responses, as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). As data are collected, the researchers will explore validity and reliability using factor analysis methods. When sufficient data have been collected, factor analysis will identify items from the Principal Profile to be used in creating a new instrument, Teachers' Perceptions of Principal (TPOP), to be used as a measure of leadership behaviors.

The Instrument

An instrument, *Principal Profile* (Appendix A), designed to measure principal performance, had been developed several years earlier. The *Principal Profile* (PP) consists of 133 items, of which 103 were stated in a positive mode and 30 were related to qualities or actions that were generally considered negative. The positive items were grouped into areas identified as Management, Relationships, Delegation, and Personal Qualities. Each area includes items that describe characteristics or behaviors considered desirable in effective leaders. Assessment was based on a five-point Likert scale with a score of 5 suggesting that the principal was perceived to be demonstrating the criterion at a level considered "outstanding." Alternative levels of demonstration included 4 as "clearly above average," 3 as "average," 2 as "clearly below average," and 1 as "unacceptable."

Prior to conducting this research, the instrument had been administered only to graduate students in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. The instrument was administered during the spring, Summer I, Summer II, and fall semesters of 2000. Graduate students who completed the instrument were teachers enrolled in evening courses to



become certified as school administrators, having previously earned masters degrees, or teachers completing the requirements for a masters degree in Administration and Supervision. The results of that research were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association held at Bowling Green, Kentucky in November 2000.

Participants and Design

During the spring of 2001, the superintendent of schools for a north Louisiana parish agreed to administer the instrument entitled "Principal Profile" to each of his principals and their respective teachers. Assistant principals were not included in the study. The instrument was completed by each teacher (N=258) and their anonymity was assured in that no names were affixed and the completed forms were collected by a teacher and delivered to the superintendent's office. The instruments from each school were assigned a school number. The principal from each school (N=14) also completed the same instrument and delivered it to the superintendent's office where each survey form was grouped with the appropriate school. Demographic data was not requested on the instrument so no efforts were made to investigate the difference of responses against various demographic variables.

The completed instruments were given to the researchers for analysis with the researchers agreeing to provide site specific information which could be used by the superintendent in efforts to identify areas of strength and weakness among the school principals. After the compiled data was returned to the superintendent, data review sessions were to be scheduled with each principal.

Analysis of Data

For the purposes of the school superintendent, a tabulation of data was completed for each school that presented the mean score awarded by the teachers on each individual item and the self-score on each item given by the principal. This material was provided to the superintendent, who conducted sessions with each principal, discussing discrepancies that existed between the teachers'



and the administrator's scores. The researchers were interested in examining the variation in perception between the two groups and how the items would distribute themselves with a factor analysis. The researchers had planned to use a panel of faculty members to assess the items on the instrument, but it was determined that a better approach would be to repeat the administration of the instrument several times and determine those items which consistently showed perceptual agreement in terms of response by the teachers.

Perceptual data presentation

The data presented in Table I show the respective mean scores given by each faculty and the mean self-score given by the respective principal from 14 different schools within the district. These means were calculated using the responses from each of the 133 items on the PP. A total mean score for all faculty (n = 258) and principals (n = 14) was also calculated. As indicated by the table, the overall mean (M = 3.75) for teacher perceptions of their principal, based on all 133 items, was lower than the overall mean of principal's perceptions (M = 3.9632). Data for the individual schools indicate that some principals rated themselves lower than their faculty members (50%). An equal percentage of principals rated themselves higher than their faculty. In five of the fourteen schools, the mean ratings of teachers was greater than 4.0. In four of these five schools, the principals rated themselves lower than their faculty. In two of the fourteen schools, mean ratings by teachers were less than 3.0. In both of these schools, principals rated themselves higher than their faculty. These data suggest that principals tend to rate their overall performance high when teacher perceptions reflect low ratings. Conversely, principals who are rated high by their teachers tend to rate themselves lower.



Table 1

Comparison of Teachers' and Principals' Perceptions

SCHOOL	TEACHER N	TEACHER MEAN	PRINCIPAL MEAN
1	21	3.5675	4.0448
2	17	4.5171	4.1642
3	22	3.6998	3.6493
4	13	4.5855	3.3731
5	22	2.4323	3.9552
6	17	3.4662	3.6940
7	27	3.7329	3.5000
8	35	3.9288	2.9701
9	28	4.5007	4.4925
10	15	3.7597	4.4701
11	15	4.2602	4.4254
12	19	2.7777	4.5000
13	3	4.2960	3.4627
14	4	3.0653	4.7836
Total	258	3.7507	3.9632 (14)

Results of exploratory factor analysis

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), principal component analysis and factor analysis can be used "to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of factors" (p. 585). This research was designed to collect data for the purpose of identifying factors that emerged from the 133 items currently included on the PP instrument. Additional data collection and



analyses will follow and serve to guide the researchers in reducing the number of items on the PP (to become the Teachers' Perceptions of Principals-TPOP) and establish validity and reliability. Thus, exploratory factor analysis was used in this study to identify those items that clustered to form factors. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed using SPSS^x (1998) on the 133 items for a sample of 272 teachers and principals. Initial analysis identified 7 components with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and explained 80.17% of the variance (see Table 2). Because of the large number of items, this table includes only components 1-20. Varimax rotation of Sums of Squared Loadings also identified seven factors in the solution and explained 80.17% of the total variance.

Table 3 shows the items from the PP that resulted in the highest loadings for each of the seven factors. Items loading on Factor 1 included behaviors or traits that address the principal's ability to manage human resources. Thus, Factor 1 was titled "Management of Personnel." Items 104 through 133 on the PP all address negative characteristics or behaviors of the principal. A high rating on these items indicates that the principal is perceived to demonstrate the negative behavior to a high degree. The highest loadings for Factor 2 were negatively related to the factor and thus represent items in which higher ratings indicate less desirable behaviors. All items loading on Factor 2 describe the principal as being "Domineering." Factor 3 also includes items that resulted in negative loadings, with the exception of item number 62. These items describe behaviors or attributes of a principal who fails to establish or accomplish goals. Thus, Factor 2 was labeled "Goal Commitment." The items with high loadings on Factor 4 appear to describe personal traits that characterize the principal's interpersonal relationships. The factor was titled "Personal Qualities." The seven items that loaded highest on Factor 5 describe behaviors in which the principal encourages staff participation in school decisions. Factor 5 was labeled "Delegation." The two items loading on Factor 6 are clearly related to the intellectual ability of the principal and



consequently were labeled "Knowledgeable." Factor 7 included only two items that resulted in loadings greater than .30. These two items describe behaviors directed toward improving instruction. Thus, this factor was labeled "Instructional Emphasis."

In summary, the exploratory factor analysis, based on the data from a sample of 272 teachers and principals, resulted in a factor solution that clustered the 133 items on the Principal Profile into 7 factors. These factors were labeled as follows: (1) Management of Personnel, (2) Domineering, (3) Lack of Goal Commitment, (4) Personal Qualities, (5) Delegation, (6) Knowledgeable, and (7) Instructional Emphasis. As the researchers continue to collect data using the PP or TPOP, it will be interesting to see if the items continue to load on the same dimensions.



Table 2

Total Explained Variance of Principal Profile using Principal Component Analysis

		Initial Eigenv	values	Extr	action Sums (Loading		Rotation	Sums of Squ	ared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	94.81	70.76	70.76	94.81	70.76	70.76	34.75	25.93	25.93
2	4.42	3.30	74.05	4.42	3.30	74.05	28.58	21.33	47.26
3	2.96	2.21	76.26	2.96	2.21	76.26	21.24	15.85	63.12
4	1.82	1.36	77.62	1.82	1.36	77.62	15.89	11.86	74.97
5	1.29	.96	78.58	1.29	.96	78.58	4.72	3.53	78.50
6	1.10	.82	79.40	1.10	.82	79.40	1.14	.85	79.35
7	1.03	.77	80.17	1.03	.77	80.17	1.10	.82	80.17
.8	.98	.73	80.90						
9	.90	.69	81.57						
10	.86	.65	82.21						
11	.81	.60	82.81						
12	.76	.57	83.38						
13	.72	.54	83.92						
14	.69	.52	84.43						
15	.69	.51	84.95						
16	.64	.48	85.42						
17	.63	.47	85.89						
18	.60	.45	86.34						
19	.56	.42	86.76						
20	.55	.41	87.17						



Table 3

Principal Profile: Items and Loading by Factor

Item	Loading	Factor 1: Management of Personnel	Item	Loading	Factor 2: Domineering
16	.730	Providing time for faculty to work collaboratively on curriculum, etc.	114	832	Intimidates faculty and others
11	.716	Managing support staff (non-teachers)	111	778	Authoritarian/dictatorial
32	.713	Rewards positive patterns of behavior	123	766	Is aggressive in a negative way
33	.708	Fosters collaboration and group efforts	124	758	Is arrogant
10	.684	Monitoring student performance and	110	753	Hard-headed/stubborn
31	.682	Conduct	121	741	The way to get along with him/her is to conform
31	.082	Involves parents in productive efforts with the school	113	732	We fear retaliation by the principal
43	.679	Celebrates/recognizes other's accomplishments	107	735	Tells us what to do in a negative fashion
2	.670	Keeping us informed			
Item	Loading	Factor 3: Lack of Goal Commitment	Item	Loading	Factor 4 Personal Qualities
127	757	Lacks direction	60	.571	Understands people
128	700	Lacks commitment	65	.539	Is inspiring to others
126	686	Lacks expertise	71	.538	Is friendly
125	674	Is lazy	96	.531	Is charismatic
106	644	Has poorly defined goals	74	.520	Exercises good judgement
62	.613	Makes decisions and follows through	64	.523	Demonstrates personal warmth and caring
109	617	Indecisive	101	.508	Is respected by staff



Item	Loading	Factor 5: Delegation	Item	Loading	Factor 6: Knowledgeable
46	.596	Delegates responsibility to others	105	326	Lacks knowledge
56	.500	Delegates authority and provides backing for those given the authority	97	.316	Is intelligent
55	.450	Gets things done, but doesn't do everything alone			
52	.441	Enables others to act on their own			
47	.413	Trusts teachers to make mature judgements			
49	.413	Creates opportunities for teachers to maximize their potential		-	
51	.403	Involves faculty in the development of school rules and regulations			
Item	Loading	Factor 7: Instructional Emphasis			
9	.332	Monitoring classroom performance by teachers			
4	.314	Uses a minimum of instructional time for non-instructional tasks thus maximizing time on task			

Discussion

A notable observation resulting from this study is that overall perceptual scores of principals (M=3.96) were higher than overall perceptual scores of teachers (M=3.75). The principals, as a group, had a higher opinion of themselves than did the teachers. Informally, the superintendent indicated that the principals who rated themselves higher than their teachers on the items were generally those that he would have considered weakest. One can only speculate as to why weaker principals might rate themselves higher than those who rated themselves lower yet were perceived as more effective by their teachers.



The superintendent expressed satisfaction with the instrument and appreciated the fact that it was tabulated by an outside agency. The material was comprehensive (probably too much so) and was easy to interpret. The researchers are confident that the instrument could be used effectively in assisting with the evaluation of principals and helping to determine areas that may need examination and improvement.

The factor analysis appears to have been very beneficial for further development and organization of a new and improved instrument. The items within the clusters seemed to lend themselves well to the possible new category labels.

Further Research and Development

The researchers are presently seeking additional schools to administer the instrument so sufficient numbers (1000 or greater) can be generated to substantiate the factor structure that resulted from this study. Based on the results of further analyses, items from the instrument used in this study will be selected and included in a refined instrument that can be used to assess the performance level of school administrators on various constructs identified in the research literature as related to effective school leaders. A panel of educational administration faculty and practicing school administrators will review the selected items and establish content validity of the new instrument. After establishing the validity and reliability of the new instrument, it is anticipated that the refined instrument will be marketable as a device to conduct a valid assessment of principal performance.



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Appendix A

PRINCIPAL PROFILE

This instrument is to be used to obtain a comprehensive assessment of teacher and/or principal perception of various aspects of the building principal's/assistant principal's performance and personal qualities which may impact teacher and student performance. It is hoped that the information obtained can be used as direction for professional growth for specific individuals and improvement in preparation programs for school principals. Individual teachers responding will not be identifiable.

The person being assessed is: Principal Asst. Prin
Please rate using the following scale: 5=outstanding, 4=clearly above average, 3=average, 2=clearly below average, 1=unacceptable
<u>Management</u>
1 Accessible to staff and others
2 Keeping us informed
3 Visibility in the school setting
4Uses a minimum of instructional time for non-instructional tasks thus maximizing time on task
5 Working effectively with the central (superintendent's) office
6 Emphasizing staff productivity (on-task behavior by staff)
7 Taking positions which are most beneficial to the school (on issues)
8 Communicating clearly the vision or mission of the school
9 Monitoring classroom performance by teachers
10 Monitoring student performance and conduct
11 Managing support staff (non-teachers)
12 Managing school facilities
13 Managing school finance
14 Managing equipment and supplies
15 Providing needed resources for staff
16 Providing time for faculty to work collaboratively on curriculum, etc.
17 Administering discipline effectively
18 Letting others know what is expected of them
19 Providing instructional leadership
20 Supporting excellence in the performance of staff
21 Providing for beneficial staff-development activities
22 Demonstrating high expectations for self and others
23 Providing leadership in curriculum development
24. Providing a pleasant, safe, and orderly climate for learning



Relationships
25. Shows consideration for staff (" staff includes teachers and support personnel)
26 Provides praise and recognition for staff
27 Senses the temper or tone of faculty members on given issues
28 Works to create interdependence among staff members
29 Works to improve school climate (relationships)
30 Stands up for teachers
31 Involves parents in productive efforts with the school
32. Rewards positive patterns of behavior
33 Fosters collaboration and group efforts
34 Develops loyalty in staff
35 Supports staff consensus on issues
36. Works to enhance group efforts
37 Asks for faculty input
38 Makes teachers feel like they are working toward common goals
39 Maintains communication which is candid and productive
40 Maintains productive relationships with students
41 Maintains productive relationships with parents
42 Effectively redirects negative patterns of behavior 43 Celebrates/recognizes other's accomplishments
44 Shares decision-making with teachers and other school staff members
(when appropriate)
45. Empowers faculty to make decisions not bound by principal's possible censure
<u>Delegation</u>
46 Delegates responsibility to others
46 Delegates responsibility to others 47 Trusts teachers to make mature judgements
46 Delegates responsibility to others 47 Trusts teachers to make mature judgements 48 Gives teachers a sense of professional autonomy
 46 Delegates responsibility to others 47 Trusts teachers to make mature judgements 48 Gives teachers a sense of professional autonomy 49 Creates opportunities for teachers to maximize their potential
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66 Acts as a positive catalyst to get things done
67 Sets a good example for teachers and others
68 Stays well-informed about school issues
69 Is patient
70 Tolerates stress well without taking it out on others
71 Is friendly
72 Uses time effectively
73 Has good organizational skills
74 Exercises good judgement
75 Spends the time it takes to get the job done
76 Uses a democratic approach
77 Is persuasive
78 Takes a risk when it could benefit students or school
79 Is open and candid with others
80 Is flexible (able to "roll with the punches)
81. Is honest
82. Has good planning skills
83 Is effective
84 Is fair
85 Has good problem solving abilities
86 Is reliable
87 Accepts responsibility for her/his actions
88 Is dependable
89 Provides a good model for teachers
90 Is consistent
91 Has good communication skills
92 Is predictable
93 Is dynamic
94 Is decisive (in a good way)
95 Is resourceful
96 Is charismatic
97 Is intelligent
98 Is energetic
99 Is well-informed
100 Demonstrates perseverance (sticks to it until accomplished)
101 Is respected by staff
102. Has the staff's confidence
103 Relates well to the community
100 Relates well to the community
The following are qualities or actions which generally are considered negative. Please provide
your perceptions of your principal using a scale of 5-1 with 5=very much so/often;
4=generally so; 3=sometimes/occasionally; 2=rarely; 1=not at all/never.
4-generally so, 5-sometimes/occasionally, 2-rarely, 1-not at an/never.
104 Paternalistic (treats us like children)
105 Lacks knowledge

106 Has poorly defined goals
107 Tells us what to do in a negative fashion



108 Ideas for improvement are always the principals
109 Indecisive
110 Hard-headed/stubborn
111 Authoritarian/dictatorial
112 Blames others
113. We fear retaliation by the principal
114 Intimidates faculty and others
115 Is satisfied with the status quo (is negative about change)
116. Provides poor evaluation of instruction
117 Does not provide help for teachers who need help in their classrooms
118 Supervision efforts are absent or non-productive
119 Communication is limited and formal (not productive)
120 Does not recognize or reward special accomplishments
121 The way to get along with him/her is to conform
122 I and most of the faculty avoid contact with the principal/assistant principal
123 Is aggressive in a negative way
124 Is arrogant
125 Is lazy
126 Lacks expertise
127 Lacks direction
128 Lacks commitment
128 Is ambiguous
129 Is unduly critical
130 Is not accessible
131 Is manipulative
132. Plays favorites
133. Is defensive





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